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ABSTRACT

The Conference's major purpose was to determine areas of investigation which would provide information that would help to shape future policies and means of overcoming educational disadvantage. However, the Conference also focused on positive aspects of education in country regions and the studies proposed as an outcome of the Conference are seen as seeking information that would illuminate positive features as well as problem areas. The Conference recognized that the problems associated with establishing policies relating to country education stem from a diversity in prevailing conditions in the various regions and from a lack of documented evidence of the provision of services, of the problems of children in isolated areas, and of the changing patterns of rural life and job opportunity in Australia. The main proposal of the Conference is that the Schools Commission initiate and support a coordinated program of research into country education. The Conference identified three types of study: a major investigation focusing on a sample of country areas across Australia; studies relating to specific issues in country education thought to be nationally relevant; and collection of information from education systems about developments in country education and methods of delivering educational resources and services to country areas. (Author/BRR)

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National Conference on Country Education

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A PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH INTO COUNTRY EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Report of the National Conference on Country Education, held at Launceston, Tasmania from 17-19 June, 1977.

Hobart

Education Department of Tasmania

August 1977

INTRODUCTION

This Report is presented to the Australian Schools Commission by the group of educational administrators and researchers who took part in the recent National Conference on Country Education in Launceston. It represents a consensus reached by participants after a period of intense examination and discussion of country education. It reflects the view that much more needs to become known about opportunities for young people in the country areas of Australia if projects concerned with the problems of country children and country schools are to be soundly based.

The Report does not attempt to detail the many important initiatives in country education being undertaken by all states at the present time but focuses on the identification of areas where further studies are necessary. It proposes that the Schools Commission, in co-operation with the states and non-government school authorities, initiate a program of research into country education and the dissemination of information about it.

The present document is based on conclusions reached at the Conference and further consultation carried out subsequently. It is presented to the Commission by the Education Department of Tasmania, as the authority responsible for the organization of the Conference.

Neville Behrens
Compiler

BACKGROUND

In the course of discussions held late in 1976 between officers of the Education Department of Tasmania and officers of the Schools Commission it was suggested that a national conference of people with a specialist knowledge of country education would be an important step in the development of the Country Education Program, to be introduced by the Commission in 1977. The Conference was seen as the most suitable means by which important areas for research and the collection of information could be identified. Similarly, it was recognized that the conference could identify other projects that should be undertaken as the program proceeded.

Following these discussions the Tasmanian Education Department submitted a specific proposal and the Commission authorized the payment of a Special Project Grant of $4,000 for the organization of a conference. Arrangements were made to bring together people with responsibility for administering educational programs in country areas and specialists who had been involved in research into country education. The Conference was initially convened for Devonport between 8th and 11th May but an air traffic controllers dispute intervened and new arrangements were necessary. The venue was altered to Launceston where the Conference was held between 17th and 19th June.

PARTICIPANTS

Ken Axton	Deputy Director of Schools and Colleges (Primary), Education Department of Tasmania.
Neville Behrens	Principal Education Officer (Services), Education Department of Tasmania and Chairman, Country Education Committee (Tasmania).
Jean Blackburn	Commissioner (full-time), Australian Schools Commission.
Peter Cameron	Chief Executive Officer, Australian Schools Commission.
Kevin Davis	Principal Education Adviser, Department of Education, Northern Territory.
Don Edgar	Reader in Sociology, La Trobe University and Chairman, Country Education Project Planning Committee (Victoria)
Ken Egan	Executive Officer, Country Education Project Planning Committee (Victoria)
Ron Fitzgerald	Dean, School of General Studies, State College of Victoria (Burwood) and Commissioner: Poverty and Education in the Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty.
Joyce Fitzpatrick	Parents' representative, Morphett Vale, South Australia.
John Haden	Co-ordinator, South Australian Disadvantaged Schools Program.
David Lewis	Consultant, Australian Schools Commission.

Barry McGaw	Professor of Education, Murdoch University, Western Australia.
David Maher	Assistant Regional Director of Education, North West Region, New South Wales Department of Education.
Jim Quinn	Director of Schools, Western Australian Education Department and Chairman, Committee for Country Disadvantage (Western Australia).
Shirley Randell	Acting Director, Disadvantaged Schools Program Australian Schools Commission.
Barry Smith	Executive Officer, Country Education Committee, (Tasmania).
Frank Snars	Regional Director, South West Region, Queensland Department of Education.
Ruth Weston	Research Fellow, School of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Melbourne.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The major purpose of the Conference was to determine areas of investigation which would provide information that would help to shape future policies and means of overcoming educational disadvantage. However, the Conference also focused on the positive aspects of eduction in country regions and the studies proposed as an outcome of the Conference are seen as seeking information that would illuminate positive features as well as problem areas.

The Conference recognized that the problems associated with establishing policies relating to country education stem from a diversity in the prevailing conditions in the various regions and from a lack of documented evidence of the provision of services, of the problems of children in isolated areas and of the changing patterns of rural life and job opportunity in Australia.

PROPOSALS

The main proposal of the Conference is that the Schools Commission initiate and support a co-ordinated program of research into country education and undertake the preparation of a report and other publications supporting present and proposed initiatives in country education. The Conference recommends that the Commission provide financial support to systems, institutions, other agencies, and individuals to carry out the studies identified in this report. It strongly recommends that studies be made on a co-ordinated basis and that the Schools Commission, the State and non-government systems and parent organizations co-operatively plan and implement them.

After considering our existing knowledge about country education in Australia and necessary areas for examination and research, the Conference identified three types of study:

(1) A major investigation focusing on a sample of country areas across Australia.

(2) Studies relating to specific issues in country education thought to be nationally relevant.

(3) Collection of information from education systems about developments in country education and methods of delivering educational resources and services to country areas.

(1) MAJOR INVESTIGATION: Educational services and outcomes in sampled country areas across Australia.

The major recommendation of the Conference focuses on outcomes and educational provision in a cross-section of country centres with populations up to 20,000. Naturally, such an investigation would be particularly concerned with the provision of educational resources and with educational outcomes but delegates at the Conference also stressed two further dimensions:

(a) the need to examine the nature of country communities and the relationship between a rural environment and educational outcomes; and

(b) a focus on life chances and the effect on country children of the structure of occupational choices.

The papers by Dr. Edgar and Dr. Fitzgerald in Appendix 1 of this Report reflect these dimensions of the discussion.

The proposal of the Conference is that, in each State and the Northern Territory, a number of country centres of different sizes and functions would be studied in terms of the following:

(a) the collection of information about community characteristics, school characteristics, and educational services provided in the centre;

(b) an examination of educational outcomes, including participation in schooling;

(c) a study of children leaving school for employment. This was seen as a longitudinal study over 12 months, beginning in December 1977, of approximately 4,000 school leavers. The purpose of the study would be to ascertain point of leaving, level of

unemployment, kind of occupation gained and the place of occupation. These factors would be related to qualification, age, sex, ethnic background and parent's occupation;

(d) a study of children leaving country schools for education elsewhere. The purpose of the study would be to ascertain when these children leave, where they go and why; and

(e) a study of parents in country areas. The purpose of this study would be to seek to establish the attitude of parents in a number of sampled regions to the educational services provided and the difficulties they see in securing satisfactory employment for their children. It is proposed that this study be carried out by parent organisations in the various States.

(2) SPECIFIC ISSUE STUDIES

The purpose of these studies is to provide information that will verify or deny the assumptions that are made about advantage and disadvantage in education in country regions. It is envisaged that the Schools Commission would commission or otherwise support systems, institutions, other agencies, or individuals to carry out the studies listed below.

(a) Induction into city life

Purpose: to establish the extent to which country children are provided with adequate skills and experiences to cope competently in an urban society where most of their employment opportunities will arise and the support structure necessary to assist in the process of induction into city life.

(b) Curriculum choice for country students

Purpose: to identify the extent to which country children may be disadvantaged because of the limited curriculum choices available to them and to identify ways by which options might be extended.

(c) Correspondence services and isolated children's allowances

Purpose: (i) to examine existing services to correspondence school children and the extent to which they may be disadvantaged in comparison with children attending normal schools and (ii) to examine the extent to which tension exists between the alternative policies of providing individual allowances and of upgrading of education services located in country regions.

(d) Selection, training and induction of teachers in country and remote areas

Purpose: to examine the pre-service programs of the various systems together with the selection and induction procedures used for teachers entering country service to ascertain their effectiveness in achieving their purpose and their possible effects on educational outcomes.

(e) Student travel

Purpose: to investigate the relationships between the distance pupils have to travel to attend school and educational outcomes, and the relative merits of different forms of school consolidation.

(f) Comparison of differing experience, in school and out of school, between country and metropolitan children.

Purpose: to examine the cultural and social organizations and facilities in a sample of urban and rural communities in terms of (a) the availability of resources and experiences; (b) the nature and extent of use of participation by schools and by children and their families; and (c) the extent to which access to such organizations and facilities is significant in influencing educational outcomes.

(g) Use of educational media

Purpose: to examine the current restrictions applying to the use of radio and television for educational purposes and the extent to which these may restrict the availability and effectiveness of the services provided. (e.g. schools of the air are by law unable to provide programs for pupil supervisors or to play recorded music).

(h) Staffing of country schools

Purpose: to determine the factors which contribute to difficulty in staffing some country schools and the extent to which they can affect educational outcomes.

(i) Minority groups

Purpose: (i) to examine the extent to which migrant children in country areas may suffer educational disadvantage relative to other children in these areas; (ii) to identify the extent to which itinerant children in country areas may suffer educational disadvantage relative to other children in these areas; (iii) to determine the extent to which additional resources may be required to provide adequate educational services for itinerant and migrant country children.

(j) Career patterns of teachers

Purpose: To establish the patterns of teacher mobility between country and metropolitan regions for teachers seeking promotion with a view to establishing how this influences the quality of educational services provided in country regions.

(3) COLLECTION OF BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT EDUCATION IN COUNTRY AREAS

The Conference fulfilled a very valuable function in enabling information to be shared among participants about developments in country education in the various systems and different ways of providing educational resources to country areas. The Conference certainly did not accept that the problems of country children will be overcome by providing more educational resources but there would seem to be a need for information to be obtained from State and Catholic education systems about the provisions they are making for country areas. Such information would include the following items identified by the Conference

(a) the need for and availability of appropriate secondary education;

(b) the provision of support/specialist/remedial services in country regions;

(c) the types of school in country regions, including pre-school facilities;

(d) the incentives and provisions made to attract and retain teachers; and

(e) the services provided for isolated children through correspondence schools, schools of the air, allowances, etc.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Conference found the sharing of information about recent developments and new projects in country education most valuable. It recommends to the Schools Commission the preparation and publication of a directory of projects in country education that have been undertaken in the various systems or that are currently being developed.

2. The Conference has responded to the absence of studies in country education by proposing a major program of research. In addition, the task of identifying and summarizing studies that have been completed in Australia and in other countries is an important one. The Conference welcomes the action the Schools Commission has taken in engaging Mr. D. Lewis to compile a 'resource review' of information and research relating to country education and, to make this review more generally available, recommends its publication.

3. In the context of the preceding recommendations, it should be noted that there is, at present, no publication which examines the field of country education generally, summarizes our present knowledge, and identifies lines of future development. The Conference considers that the preparation of a report on country education, similar in scope to Girls, Schools and Society, would provide a very valuable source of ideas and information. It recommends that the Schools Commission explore ways in which such a report could be prepared.

4. The program of research recommended by the Conference is seen as a co-operative program between the Schools Commission, State Departments of Education and non-government school authorities. Consistent with this approach the Conference recommends the establishment of a Project Advisory Committee, consisting of nominated representatives of each State Department and of non-government schools, of a representative of country parents, and of Schools Commission personnel. The function of the Committee will be to co-ordinate the research projects and data-gathering proposals of the conference and to provide for continuing liaison between the participating agencies.

APPENDIX 1: FACTORS RELATED TO THE UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM COUNTRY AREAS

The following position papers on this subject were prepared for the Conference by some of the researchers who participated. In existing discussion of country education it is possible to identify a number of different emphases and the Conference organizers had suggested that papers might focus on these:

* an emphasis on the level of aspirations and expectations among parents, teachers and students;

* an emphasis on the effects of an "urban-oriented status system" on students' sense of self and projected future (including the 'need-to-leave-home' syndrome);

* an emphasis on a lower level of educational resource provision to country areas;

* an emphasis on structural differences between educational provision in city and country areas (e.g. in the organization of schooling or the absence of upper secondary provisions);

* the connection between problems such as financial hardship, limited cultural experiences and restricted work horizons and the development of individuals who are competent and feel able to control their own lives;

* an emphasis on the problems of "access" and "remoteness", including sensitivity to the differences between country areas in terms of distance, economic situation, provision of services, quality of teaching, and so on.

It was suggested that discussion papers prepared for the Conference examine this range of factors.

DR. DON EDGAR: "THE REPRODUCTION OF STRUCTURED DISADVANTAGE"

If we take Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the education system as an agent of social and cultural reproduction we may get further in thinking about problems of rural education. His analysis suggests that we should look at the structures in which processes of disadvantage take place, so our terms will be active ones like "processing" and "disadvantaging" and our reference points will be the distribution of resources, the structure of choice points within the system, power and the mastery of certain forms of competence necessary for access to system rewards, the combined effects of processes of exclusion (e.g. exams) and "self-elimination" from certain routes of academic, technical and social achievement, and the ways in which the relative autonomy of school systems preserves the status quo (especially through the "pedagogic work" of shaping new teachers by the previous generation of teachers).

In more practical terms, we need to know more about

(a) how schools manage to remain isolated (autonomous) from their community, and how to break this isolation down.

(b) how the "cultural capital" (linguistic, social, technical) of rural communities differs from that of other communities and how that affects the role of the school.

(c) what positive advantages exist, as opposed to disadvantages and how they can be utilized for the benefit of education in schools and outside. This is where the Victorian Country Education Project takes off, and insists on identifying existing skills, competences, resources on which to build, rather than accepting a negative philosophy of disadvantage.

(d) how the education system itself produces dis-

advantage, as opposed to assuming disadvantage stems from weaknesses in the home cultural background. By this I mean, to identify the blockage points (teacher promotion procedures, unnecessary mobility of teachers, regulations about school size governing eligibility for facilities, staff etc.) in the entire school delivery system which lead inevitably to special problems for small, isolated rural schools.

(e) new patterns of action and provision of services. Here again the Victorian scheme stresses "co-operative competence", because we feel a continued emphasis on the development of individual competence plays into the hands of a system which divides and conquers. It may be that through co-operation, sharing of resources, sharing of the decision-making process and a concentration on the competences that communities possess, we could produce results that last beyond an initial funding period. It is political knowhow that counts and it may well be that we can produce more competent, efficacious, self-confident people through sharing than through individualized efforts. This means breaking down traditional educational "sorting" processes.

(f) how the limited social and cultural horizons of country people affect their aspiration levels, their range of choices, their image of the future. For example, what happens to rural children who leave school early? to those who stay on to HSC but face limited chances of entering tertiary education or jobs? to those who reach university and find themselves ill-prepared for the urban/academic sub-culture.

(g) the attitudes of teachers to rural students and their possible futures. Does the urban/academic training of teachers work against their fostering a sense of self-worth in pupils? Do they ever seek to explore and understand the rural environment, and does this

make any difference to how they work with students? What are the structural resistances, blockage-points against parent-community involvement with teachers in schools? Should our efforts be directed outside the schools to foster a better attitude to education and occupational choice?

(h) the organizational dynamics of schools as they affect change implementation. We know that the personalities of school principals and teachers have an impact; but we also know that different structures have differing impacts on "school climate", choices, access to facilities and forms of competence, success rates and the exercise of power.

Research must focus on such structures. We can do little to alter family background, but we can alter structures which reinforce or reproduce disadvantage.

DR. RON FITZGERALD: "THE MATTER OF LIFE CHANCES"

A distinctive task for country schools is to reduce the relative disadvantage suffered by their students because of distance from the cities. For many families - particularly those worst placed to gain a fair share of benefits from the social system - schools are perhaps the only vehicles for increasing the life chances of their children. A first step is for teachers to recognize the special responsibilities they should undertake for rural folk. A whole set of measures must then be introduced in order to enable country schools to function more effectively. These moves need to go beyond the field of education and include other forms of intervention.

Because life-chances are largely determined by opportunities for worthwhile employment, access to worthwhile jobs for country school leavers ought to be a focal point of concern. The likely

prospect of their having to shift to the cities in search of work is only one of several particular problems they face. Their difficulties are increased by the growth of unemployment, greater accent on certificates and more intense competition for careers. Magnifying factors are the changes being wrought by the second industrial revolution and the continued growth of the cities at the expense of country towns.

In what ways can schools operate more successfully for country children?

They need, above all, to be able to meet the more complex demands made of them by society. The prime goal of personal competency must include not only the development of sound skills in the three R's but also the fourth R of human relationships. Faith in one's individual worth and regard for other people appear increasingly important these days to personal survival. In accord with such an objective, teachers will build on successful experience in learning linked with rural cultures or ways of life. They will abandon artificial processes of sorting and ranking which engender a sense of failure and personal defeat in so many young people.

An important function for country schools is to extend the relatively limited range of experiences of isolated children. Hence, a carefully planned program of excursions linked with exchange schemes between rural and city students is a vital element in the curriculum. Within this approach children will also be given a growing understanding of the world of work based on first-hand knowledge. If they are to gain a sufficient awareness of the various jobs and careers available, country children must be given the opportunity to rub shoulders with workers in various types of occupations located only in the cities and large towns. Otherwise rural students tend to shape their vocational expectations in terms of the relatively limited circle of people in the local workforce.

Good country schools will be characterized by a special concern for the outcomes of their work. They will assume a formal responsibility to help school-leavers secure worthwhile employment whether in local towns or in distant cities. Systematic follow-up of at least selected

samples of former students will seek to identify how the school experience has contributed to or detracted from life chances. In undertaking these tasks, teachers will secure the co-operation of parents and other volunteers. Hence, teachers will seek to understand local cultures and family attitudes to education as a prelude to their themselves becoming part of the social networks.

MRS. JOYCE FITZPATRICK: "ONE ASPECT OF COUNTRY DISADVANTAGE: HAVING TO MAKE CHOICES WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF AVAILABLE OPTIONS".

Early in 1975 a survey was made by the South Australian State Association of School Welfare Clubs in two country areas of South Australia of the educational requirements of geographically disadvantaged students in years 11 and 12. The important emphasis of this survey was that it should seek information from parents and students who were currently involved in problems associated with obtaining secondary education at levels beyond those of their local school. Funds for the survey were provided by Schools Commission Special Projects Program.

The need for this sort of survey became apparent to me when, as President of the above parents' association, I became well-known and accepted as an interested friend in the more remote areas of South Australia, and consequently often received "confidences" of parents, particularly mothers, who felt they "didn't know where to turn" for assistance in the education, and/or job training, of their children who had reached the upper limits of their local school.

The families who became my main concern for purposes of the survey were those who had not the financial resources to send their children to boarding school, nor sufficient courage or knowledge to look for alternatives. I met mothers who told me that they had one son away at boarding school but that this strained resources so much that other members of the family could not follow. In one instance, a 16-year-old boy attended boarding school but his mother owned only one pair of shoes and no stockings. She asked, then, how could she possibly afford

to send the other son to boarding school. Another told me that if she had known that farming would become so unproductive and that upper secondary education would be necessary to get a job, her younger children would never have been born. This family, too, had one child at boarding school.

Once funding was granted, two representative areas of South Australia were chosen - the Murray Mallee and Eyre Peninsula. In early 1975 these districts were well supplied with Area Schools but were without access to year 12 courses and, in some instances, year 11.

I spoke to secondary students of most schools in the two areas chosen, including students in Special Rural Schools. To ensure that I contacted parents who may not normally be friendly enough to the local school to attend a meeting, I asked local women with whom I'd had previous contact to arrange meetings in each locality.

As well as identifying factors that contribute to educational disadvantage at secondary level and which have been recognised as significant (e.g. problems of administration including lack of continuity of courses and experienced teachers, financial hardship, restricted work expectations, etc.) it was noticed that as parents became more at ease during our discussions, they admitted to lack of knowledge of options other than boarding schools.

Descriptive booklets and other printed information available at the school and the obvious interest and concern of some school staffs had not succeeded in making many parents and students aware of secondary schools, i.e. High Schools, that provided alternative courses to P.E.B. at years 11 and 12, of work experience courses, and of the wide range of technical subjects available at large high schools.

It seems that the reading ability of the clients was not always concomitant with the sales pitch of the vendor.

Country workers were reluctant to appear at what they considered to be a disadvantage in the eyes of young teachers who do not always stay long enough in a school for the more recessive parents to

feel comfortable in their company; therefore they would not ask questions which would make them appear ignorant. People at this time (early 1975) were becoming aware that it was no longer wise to assume that the farm would support the school leaver (at age 15 or 16) for more that two or three years. Mothers, particularly, were seeking ways to equip their children to cope with life, at ages of 18 and 19, away from the farm and probably in a different locality. Employment opportunities in the rural areas under survey were extremely limited.

Parents' expectations of more education, the acquisition of some employable skill, and a little bit of culture on the side, would enable their children to

(a) resume life on the farm with skills that would assist with alternative or supplementary employment later, if necessary

(b) widen their horizons so that they may seek further training for types of employment not found in their own district

(c) gain social enrichment from other groups and associations not present in their own localities.

A surprisingly large percentage of mothers wanted their children to move away for one or more years of upper secondary education rather than to have their local small schools provide narrow courses. They doubted that parity with city opportunity would be reached. Social enrichment was emphasised often by mothers who said "If they don't get away now, they'll never get away, and then they'll be of no more help to their children than I am to mine".

Parents admitted that they made mistakes when seeking "something more". Courses at boarding schools were often seen as irrelevant by students and some were leaving mid-term to return home. As well as the financial difficulties involved, parents were questioning whether boarding schools were the solution to their problem. The lack of knowledge of educational facilities currently available and the fear that children may not be "properly supervised" if they moved away often precluded

parents from making decisions about "something more".

By questioning, I found that many parents had not been to the city except to be hospitalised; some could not find a number, especially that of a Government Department, in the City Telephone Directory; that even those who had spent one year or more away at the traditional family boarding school, had never seen the inside of a High School. Often these were quite successful rural workers.

It seemed desirable that information on educational and boarding facilities, and opportunities for job training, should be available to people in a more easily assimilated way than printed brochures; in effect it seemed that an educational "lifeline" was desirable - an easy telephone number to ring with comfortable non-official type of advice in answer to a specific problem presented.

Schools Commission funding has been made available for the setting up of a pilot project to provide this service for one area in South Australia. It is expected that the Country/City Information Unit operates as from 1st July, 1977.

MRS. RUTH WESTON: "RURAL-URBAN DIFFERENCES IN ATTAINMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW" *

Although in the present study it was found that most parents held reasonably high aspirations for their children, studies on rural and urban school children suggest that the latter tend to achieve higher academic success. For example, Verco & Whiteman's (1968) study in New South Wales demonstrated a lower relative proportion of rural school children reaching Form IV or VI and further, for those who continued through these levels, lower chances of gaining either Commonwealth Secondary or University Scholarships. With regard to Secondary Scholarships, proportionally more rural than urban children from non-Government schools applied for these. The percentage applying from Government schools was lower than that for their urban counterparts, but still fewer applicants were successful. Results concerning

* EXTRACT FROM: Salmon, P.W. and Weston, R.E. Human Adjustments in Rural Towns: The Impact of Changes in Agriculture on Quality of Life. School of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Melbourne. 1974.

the awarding of Commonwealth University Scholarships revealed a greater proportion of rural than urban applicants from both Government and non-Government schools, and a lower proportion obtaining these awards. Since these scholarships are awarded on the basis of the aggregate of all HSC results, and independently of the school, then it appears that the rural applicants tended to show inferior achievement.

Similar results were obtained by Fensham (1965) in Victoria; the awarding of Commonwealth Secondary Scholarships clearly discriminated against rural schools. However, Fensham did not take into account the proportions of students who applied.

Another way of looking at attainment levels is through comparison of the relative numbers of students who continue on through their secondary education. Pyfield (1970), for example, analysed the numbers of students at each form level in all Victorian State High Schools beginning with the numbers in Form 1 in 1963, and following through to Form VI in 1968. Marked discrepancies were evident between the "retention profiles" of rural and urban schools with the numbers in rural schools declining far more rapidly.

Finally, if the destinations of rural and urban school leavers are considered, further evidence emerges of inferior achievement of the rural youth. In Radford's (1962) study, 14.1% of the total number of boys from urban State High Schools in Victoria became University students. For rural boys, the percentage was 4.9%. At the other extreme, the proportions of urban and rural boys entering semi-skilled and unskilled labour were 5.4% and 9.7% respectively.

The research evidence from overseas studies also supports these remarkably consistent trends. For example, in the United States, Featherman (1971) found that farm or rural, as opposed to urban, background negatively influenced educational attainment. In fact even with regard to intelligence, rural children tend to average significantly lower than their urban counterparts. Chopra (1968) outlines studies demonstrating this trend in the United States, Sweden, Rumania, Ceylon and India.

Migration to Urban Areas

This review, so far, has been restricted to attainments of

rural youth who still reside in their native town. The trend for youth to migrate to larger centres or urban towns has already been mentioned. One important aspect, then, of the education of these residents should involve any preparation necessary to promote adjustment to this new environment and ability to compete in the work force.

Unfortunately, those studies which have investigated the relative occupational mobility of rural migrants and urban natives suggest that the former succeed less in this respect. Featherman (1971) for example, in his study of metropolitan residents in the United States concluded that "men with rural or farm backgrounds have an educational handicap to their occupational and economic careers which men with urban backgrounds do not suffer".

Beal (1967) produced a list of conclusions reached on the basis of his review of the literature into this area. This summary which once again illustrates the achievement handicap associated with having a rural origin is transcribed below:

1. Compared with other migrants and natives the rural migrant has less education and lower income, lives in poorer housing areas and, to a disproportionate extent, finds himself in the lower classes.

2. The smaller the community of orientation (where the person lived most of the time between 13 and 19 years of age), the more likely he is to spend a high proportion of this work career in a manual occupation. This is especially true of those with farm backgrounds.

3. The larger the community of orientation, the higher the status job held.

4. The smaller the community of orientation, the more

obstacles the individual is likely to encounter in his attempt to be upwardly mobile, both from the point of view of jobs that an individual holds and in intergeneration mobility.

5. In cases where rural migrants do move into relatively higher status occupational groups there is the definite tendency for them to have lower incomes than others in the same occupational groups.

6. Rural migrants belong to fewer formal organizations and participate the least in those organizations to which they do belong.

7. Farm migrants have the slowest rate of entrance into formal organizations.

8. Movement to the urban centres appears to reduce the amount of participation of rural migrants.

9. Smaller percentages of rural migrants, both husbands and wives, were members of church-religious organizations. There is limited data that indicate that movement from rural areas to city tends to reduce the frequency of church attendance.

10. The rural migrant wife attends meetings less frequently than any other resident class.

11. The rural migrant takes part in fewer informal activities than either the urban migrant or non-migrant. This is especially true of wives. Their informal activities tended to decrease rather than increase with the move.

12. The farm-reared population is less active politically than the nonfarm-reared.

REASONS OFFERED FOR RURAL-URBAN DIFFERENCES IN ATTAINMENT

The Report so far has considered the research into rural/urban differences in educational and occupational attainments, and the relative occupational mobility associated with migration to the city. In general, the research demonstrates inferiority of the rural youth in each of these three areas.

The reasons offered for these trends although many and varied, all tend to relate in some way to inequality in educational opportunities. This concept is indeed complicated and for our present purposes it will be considered as encompassing at least interaction of external environmental factors and factors relating to cultural background. The literature on this matter roughly fits into these two categories.

Aspiration Level

Before considering these inherent environmental and cultural differences which are seen as producing variability in performance, some mention of aspiration level is important. This can, undeniably have quite an effect on both academic and occupational attainments and in itself may be influenced by environmental and cultural differences. Hence, it is often viewed as a mediating variable between the latter and the achievement outcome (Borow, 1966).

In line with trends demonstrated for the attainment level data, Schwarzweller's (1968) recent review of the United States literature reveals an almost consistent trend for lower likelihood of rural town and farm youths to want a college education or to aspire toward the higher levels of socio-economic success. Similarly, Kuvlesky & Ohlendorf (1968) outline a series of studies from various nations using differing age groups which demonstrate lower occupational aspirations of rural youth. These lower aspirations have further been demonstrated even when allowances are made for differences in intelligence and socio-economic status (Sewell & Orenstein, 1965).

1. Inequalities Associated with External Factors.

1.1. Educational Facilities

To live in a country area which is steadily losing its population may well imply paying higher costs for a lower standard of education. At least, this is apparently the case in the United States. Beal's (1965) review of the United States literature for example, suggests that despite efforts to the contrary the standards of schools will often decline in terms of curricular, well-trained teachers, teachers in specialized areas, professional specialists, staff stability, teachers' salaries, extra-curricular activities, and school facilities.

It is not known to what extent these regressive trends exist in Australian rural schools, and the whole area requires close scrutiny. At least, according to Verco & Whiteman (1968), one could argue that teacher ability should be unbiasedly distributed in Australian schools as a result of the States' utilizing a centralized education system. Further Fyfield (1970) argues that country teachers in Victoria tend to have on an average higher qualifications but less experience than those in Melbourne. This is supported by a recent survey in physics teaching in Victoria (MacKay, 1968). In fact, it is a practice of the Education Department to send new teachers to the country.

With regard to school facilities, the Education Department attempts an impartial distribution of basic necessities. However, there is substantial evidence showing that the country school is more likely to lose out on provision of loans for those extras such as libraries, swimming pools, gymnasiums, halls, grounds development, septic sewerage (Fyfield, 1970).

A further source of inequality may arise from size of both the Victorian State schools and their senior classes. It is argued that the smaller sizes more typical of country schools hamper group discussion and interaction and restrict the number of subjects offered. The school libraries also are often limited as a result (Fyfield, 1970).

1.2 Distance

Another external factor discriminating against the country school student is that of distance from both school and the metropolis.

(i) Distance from School

Firstly, there is the large distances required of many to travel to and from school each day. This has become more widespread at those towns declining in population attempt to maintain quality of schools through consolidation of the smaller units. In 1966, over 58,000 rural school children travelled by buses or subsidized trains a total daily distance of 57,000 miles. The average daily bus trip was about 50 miles, carrying an average load of about 50 children (Fyfield, 1970).

This distance from school may not simply be an inconvenience, but may in fact encompass another source of inequality in opportunity hampering attainment of rural school children. A United States study by Bertrand (1962) for example, demonstrated a significant relationship between distance from school and both high school drop-out rate and low parental participation in school matters.

(ii) Distance from the Metropolis

Distance from the Metropolis means that the rural school child has severely limited opportunities to enjoy the variety of educational and cultural experiences only offered in the metropolis. These include the special lectures, plays and films pertaining to their studies as well as the less school-specific cultural facilities such as libraries, theatres, galleries (Fyfield, 1970), Larger neighbouring centres, however, often provide a few of these

latter facilities.

Furthermore, distance is also claimed as a factor discouraging country teachers in Victoria from attending additional training courses or from continuing research or study (Fyfield, 1970).

1.3. Community Structure

A less obvious external or environmental factor which may restrict attainment or aspirations pertains to the range of occupational alternatives readily observable. Lipsett (1955), for example, argues that occupational aspirations are the product of familiarity with the occupational structure of the community - this being somewhat limited and biassed by community size. The rural youth, then, may have limited knowledge about the non-farm world and even less about those occupations associated with urban life. Burchinal, Haller & Taves (1962) also found that rural boys were less likely than urban boys to know where they could learn about occupations. Further, Whyte (1967) argues that rural youths have little opportunity to choose a reference group with high status occupations, as a result of their town's community structure.

In Fyfield's (1970) survey of Victorian rural schools, similar comments were made by some of the school principals, suggesting that the limited spectrum of occupational alternatives served to limit the child's freedom of occupational choice and to restrict his academic aspirations; with fewer alternatives, he is less likely to find one that appeals to him and which is thereby worth working for.

As an illustration of the lack of variety of occupational choices, Fyfield also refers to the Ramsay Report on the Development of Tertiary Education in Victoria, 1963, and a recent analysis of studentship holders at Monash Teachers' College, both of which note the disproportionate numbers of rural students selecting teaching as an occupation.

Similarly, in the present study, the large numbers of parents who wanted their daughters to take up this profession were noted. Fyfield (1970) argues that this probably results largely from the Government's provisions for accommodation of student teachers. This scheme, then, may for many students provide the only way in which they can obtain tertiary education. In so doing, the student is given little choice in the matter.

2. Inequalities Associated with Cultural Background

2.1. Socio-Economic Status (SES)

One of the most commonly reported variables found to relate to both aspirations and achievement is socio-economic status and education of parents. As a result, a number of studies in the United States looking into rural-urban differences in these matters point to the relatively lower socio-economic positions of most rural families as one of the main inhibiting structural variables involved (e.g. Lindstrom, 1965; Sewell & Orenstein, 1965). This relationship has been demonstrated in other countries also. Chopra (1968) in India and Carlsson (1954) in Sweden for example, observed that when students from rural and urban areas were matched for educational and occupational levels of their father, the apparent superiority of urban youth was greatly reduced. These results suggest that irrespective of the above-mentioned inequalities produced by external factors, the differences in the home background and/or economic discrepancies are of paramount importance.

(i) Economic Discrepancies

The effects of economic discrepancies are readily apparent. The country family, ranking on the average lower in this respect will have fewer resources available to finance extra books and

other equipment which may facilitate his performance or at least help counteract the meagre facilities offered by the town in this respect.

More elusive are the cultural factors associated with lower socio-economic status which have been demonstrated to hamper aspiration or attainment levels of the students concerned.

(ii) Parental Aspirations

Some studies (e.g. Burchinal et al, 1962) suggest a positive relationship between the child's academic achievements or vocational plans and his parent's aspirations. Others (reviewed by Douvan & Gold 1966), demonstrate that although lower class parents may have high aspirations, they do not foster sufficiently those skills and motives necessary to enable their children to compete successfully with their higher status peers. Such studies, then, highlight the complexity of the relationships between a few of those parental attitudes apparently associated with SES and the achievements of their offspring.

Quite a number of studies into these more subtle cultural factors of the rural environment per se have been carried out. In Fyfield's (1970) survey, school principals noted the less stimulating home environment which was more apparent in country areas in Victoria. Both Fyfield's survey, and the study by Oeser & Emery (1954), suggest the lack of verbal fluency characteristic of so many country people. This can apparently be quite a handicap in academic achievement and can produce one form of conflict in values with the school which can be rejected because of its emphasis on English (Oeser & Emery, 1954).

Thus, Fyfield hypothesizes that "fewer country parents are in sympathy with the school's values than are city parents", and studies in the United States (e.g. Burchinal et al, 1962) suggest that parental encouragement to attend college is less frequent in rural areas.

3. Personality

Finally, there are the studies relating to differences in personality traits of rural and urban youth which could well influence achievement. For example, Beal reviews some United States studies which demonstrate a greater proporation of rural boys expressing feelings of shyness, withdrawal, self-depreciation, suspicion and distrust for others and a tendency to believe that man does not control his own destiny. Urban boys on the other hand demonstrated higher dominance, aggressiveness, self-confidence and 'independent self-sufficiency' and felt that man did in fact have control over events affecting his life.

APPENDIX 2: CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Friday 17 June

12.00 Lunch

1.00 (a) Welcome and Introduction: Mr. K. Axton, Deputy Director of Schools and Colleges (Primary), Tasmania

(b) Conference arrangements: Mr. N. Behrens, Principal Education Officer (Services), Tasmania

1.15 The purpose of the conference:
Mrs. Jean Blackburn, Commissioner, Schools Commission

1.30 Reports and position papers from State and Territory conference representatives: Chairman - Mr. K. Axton.

(a)	Tasmania	Mr. N. Behrens
(b)	New South Wales	Mr. D. Maher
(c)	Northern Territory	Mr. K. Davis
(d)	South Australia	Mr. J. Haden
(e)	Queensland	Mr. F. Snars
(f)	Victoria	Mr. K. Egan

6.30 Dinner

Evening informal discussion

Saturday 18 June

9.00	Position paper from Western Australia by Mr. J. Quinn
9.30	Response to State position papers by Mr. D. Lewis
10.00	Break for morning tea
10.30	Plenary session led by Mrs. Jean Blackburn: to identify significant issues It is envisaged that the session would focus on our expectations about programs in country areas.
12.30	Lunch
1.45	Division into groups for workshop session This will be a search session on significant issues and their relative importance
3.30	Afternoon Tea
3.45	Plenary session: feedback from groups
5.30	End session
6.30	Dinner
8.00	Plenary session to define potential study areas - what are the priority studies? This session is preparatory to the first design stage on Sunday morning.

Sunday 19 June

8.30 Plenary session.

8.45 Group workshops: to prepare drafts of systemic level projects and of major sample studies.

10.00 Morning Tea.

Plenary session: to consider workshop drafts and to define their final form.

11.00 Recess.

2.00 Plenary session: to discuss specific issues in country education and of studies that might be carried out to provide necessary data.

2.45 Group workshops: to prepare drafts of studies in specific issues in country education.

4.30 Plenary session: to consider workshop draft and to define their final form.

5.30 Drafting of report of the conference by appointed group, Mr. Behrens, Co-ordinator.

6.30 Dinner.

8.30 Plenary session: to consider the final report draft.